

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SSM-03 ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EUR-12 /092 W
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R 291618Z MAR 77
FM AHEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2445
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USCINCEUR
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2070

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE
SUBJECT: SYRIANS CONTINUE TO GIVE WARNINGS TO HARDLINE
RIGHTISTS IN LEBANON

REF: DAMASCUS 2039

SUMMARY: THESIS OF OCCASIONALLY RELIABLE LOCAL AP STRINGER, A MARONITE, IS THAT SYRIANS WISH ASSASSINATE CHAMOUN FOR HIS OPPOSITION TO SARKIS AND COOPERATION WITH ISRAELIS. HE ALSO SAYS SYRIA IS TRYING TO COURT PHALANGE AND SPLIT IT OFF FROM KFUR ALLIES. SYRIAN MEDIA CONTINUES TO CALL FOR SUPPORT OF SARKIS AND ATTACK HIS OPPOSITION. IN EMBASSY VIEW, SYRIANS MAY BE CIRCULATING WARNINGS AGAINST CHAMOUN AND HARDLINE RIGHTISTS AS WARNING TO DESIST SRA FURTHER OPPOSITION TO REBUILDING LEBANESE ARMY ALONG RATIONAL LINES AND TO OTHER
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POLICIES SARKIS PURSUING. END SUMMARY.

1. OCCASIONALLY RELIABLE LOCAL AP STRINGER TOLD EMBOFF THAT CHAMOUN WOULD SOON BE ASSASSINATED AND "THERE WOULD BE LITTLE DOUBT THIS TIME THAT SYRIA WAS BEHIND IT." STRINGER, HIMSELF A MARONITE, ACCUSED CHAMOUN, FRANGIEH, AND KASSIS OF ACTIVELY WORKING FOR

PARTITION AND FLAUNTING THEIR ISRAELI TIES. HE CLAIMED THEY ONLY WAITING FOR RIGHT MOMENT TO TRY TO DIVIDE THE COUNTRY. SUCH ACTIONS HE CHARGED THREATENED TO REIGNITE CIVIL WAR AND COULD EVEN LEAD TO A WIDER WAR IN THE REGION.

2. HE STATED THAT RESULTS OF MARCH 22 MEETING FOUR PHALANGE REPS (AMIN GEMAYEL, KARIM PAKRADOUNI, EDMOND RIZK, AND GEORGE SAADEH) HELD WITH ASAD IN DAMASCUS WERE POSITIVE AND THAT SARG WISHED TO REBUILD LEBANESE BODY POLITIC WITH PHALANGE AS CENTRAL ELEMENT. HE SAID SARG SAW PHALANGISTS AS PARTY OPPOSING PARTITIONIST SCHEMES AND AS A GROUP WITH WHICH SYRIA COULD WORK. (HE MADE NO MENTION OF BACHIR GEMAYEL'S HARDLINE ATTITUDES). HE SAID ON THE LEFT SYRIA WAS TRYING TO REVITALIZE THE LEBANESE BAATH PARTY AND GROUP IT WITH PARTIES SUCH AS KAMAL SHATILA'S NATIONAL AND PATRIOTIC FRONT.

3. EMBOFF ASKED IF SUDDEN SYRIAN PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST LEBANESE RIGHT PARTLY DUE TO WEAKENING OF REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS IN LEBANON. STRINGER SAID THIS WAS CERTAINLY PART OF IT, BUT THAT REJECTIONISTS STILL INTOLERABLE BECAUSE THEY COOPERATING WITH IRAQ AGAINST SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON. HE SAID SYRIAN-FATAH UNDERSTANDING HAD BEEN REAIED WHEREBY FATAH EXPECTED TO DEAL WITH REJECTIONISTS IN FIRST INSTANCE, WITH SYRIAN FORCES READY TO STEP IN IF THEY DID NOT. HE SAID FAHUM OWED HIS REELECTION AS PRESIDENT OF PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL TO UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED BETWEEN SYRIA AND FATAH PRIOR TO CONFIDENTIAL

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CONVENING PNC. HE SAID FATAH IN WAKE OF JUMBLATT'S DEATH REACHING OUT TO MODERATE, TRADITIONAL MUSLIM POLITICIANS SUCH AS RASHID KARAME, SAEB SALAM, AND ABDULLAH YAFI.

4. MEANWHILE, DAMASCUS PRESS CONTINUED TO RUN PROMINENTLY EDITORIALS SUPPORTING SARKIS AND CALLING UPON ALL PATRIOTIC LEBANESE TO GIVE HIM THEIR SUPPORT. SENIOR AL-BAATH COLUMNIST AMID AL-KHULI WROTE: "IT CAN EVEN BE SAID THAT THE CRITERION OF LEBANESE NATIONALISM NOW MUST BE DEGREE OF GENUINE PARTICIPATION IN THIS HONORABLE MISSION (REBUILDING LEBANON). EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTS LEBANON'S UNITY, SECURITY, AND SOVEREIGNTY; WHO DESIRES PROTECTION OF THE SOUTH AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO AGREEMENT IN A MANNER MEETING THE INTEREST OF LEBANON AND THE RESISTANCE AND WHO FAVORS BUILDING A NATIONAL ARMY CAPABLE OF PROTECTING LEBANON... SUPPORTS PRES. SARKIS." HE WENT ON TO ISSUE THINLY VEILED THREAT TO RIGHTWING OPPONENTS OF SARKIS SAYING: "LEBANON IS IN THE END FOR THE FORCES (SUPPORTING SARKIS). IT IS NOT FOR THOSE WHO STAND BEHIND DESPERATE ATTEMPTS

TO HAMPER HIS PROGRESS."

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SYRIANS MUST BE EXTREMELY UNHAPPY WITH CHAMOUN AND OTHERS WHO HAVE BEEN LOBBYING FOR RETENTION HANNA SAID AND OTHER CHRISTIAN HARDLINE OFFICERS WHO HAVE BEEN ALMOST OPENLY COOPERATING WITH ISRAELIS, IT IS DOUBTFUL ASAD WOULD GO TO POINT OF ACTUALLY MOUNTING ATTEMPT AGAINST IHAMOUN, GIVEN THE INTENSE LOYALTY HE COMMANDS AMONG MANY RIGHTISTS. HOWEVER, SYRIANS MAY WELL BE SIGNALLING THAT THE LIMITS OF THEIR PATIENCE ARE ABOUT REACHED. FURTHER ACTS TO HINDER OR UNDERMINE EFFORTS OF SARKIS WILL NOT BE LIGHTLY TOLERATED. THIS HAS BEEN MESSAGE OF RECENT SYRIAN PRESS CAMPAIGN. REPORTED MAJOR ROLE WHICH SARG WISHES KATAEB TO PLAY IN LEBANESE ARENA REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT SYRIANS HOPING TO SPLIT PIERRE GEMAYEL AND HIS FACTION IN THE PARTY FROM THE REST OF THE KFUR FRONT, AND, THUS, BOLSTER SARKIS' CONFIDENTIAL

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FOLLOWING AMONG THE RIGHT WHILE MAKING IT EASIER FOR SYRIA TO DEAL WITH THE RECALCITRANTS. SARG MAY WELL BE HOLDING OUT PROMISE OF MAJOR POLITICAL ROLE IN RETURN FOR GENUINE PHALANGE SUPPORT FOR SARKIS. MURPHY

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/014ba1b0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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